6/566/P A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO THE

MEDICAL PROFESSION.

IN

REFUTATION OF A "STATEMENT"

PUBLISHED BY

MR. RICE WYNNE, APOTHECARY, SHREWSBURY:

TO WHICH IS AFFIXED

A COPY OF MR. WYNNE'S "STATEMENT."

"If we consider the envious man in his delight, it is like reading of the seat of a giant in a Romance; the magnificence of his house consists in the many limbs of men whom he has slain."

STEELE.

BY WM. GRIFFITH,

Member of the royal college of surgeons,

and of the medical society of st. thomas and guy's

hospitals; formerly Pupil to dr. haighton,

professor of midwifery, and to

sir astley p. cooper, bart.

SHREWSBURY: PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY J. WATTON.
1822.



A LETTER

TO THE

MEDICAL PROFESSION.

MR. WYNNE having thought it proper to circulate a Printed Letter among the Medical Profession and some Families in Shrewsbury, professing to give a "STATEMENT" of a case wherein my assistance was suddenly called for by a Family who were the Patients of Mr. Wynne, I am at length induced to obey the intreaties of my friends, rather than my own wishes and judgment, by noticing it. Had Mr. Wynne confined his letter to the Profession, nothing could have induced me to answer it. Mr. Wynne may, perhaps rightly, deem it necessary to vindicate his reputation and mode of Practice. I have never yet deemed it necessary to vindicate mine.

The following is Mr. Wynne's printed Letter and Statement.

" Shrewsbury, 5th March, 1822.

" DEAR SIR,

"Being convinced by experience, that the comfort, happiness, and respectability of the Medical Profession, very materially depend upon the LIBERAL and CONFIDENTIAL CONDUCT of its Members towards each other, and that at any time to connive at the INDELICATE and ARTFUL INTERFERENCE of ANOTHER PRACTITIONER would be unjust to the Profession at large as well as to myself; I beg to be permitted to lay before you a statement of circumstances very unpleasant in their nature and result; arising from a neglect of that candour and attention, which every man, not unmindful of reputation and character, has an undoubted right to expect and most seriously to insist upon.

" I remain, dear Sir,

" Your sincere and obedient servant,

" RICE WYNNE."

"STATEMENT."

[Mr. Wynne might complain of unfairness had not his "Statement" accompanied my remarks upon it; but as it contains many expressions unfit for the public eye, such expressions are omitted in all those copies of this pamphlet that are not intended for medical men.]

"Some months back, Mr. D. a most respectable tradesman in this town, called at my house, to request I would attend his wife during her expected confinement at the latter end of February or beginning of March. I replied, that if it were his and Mrs. D.'s particular desire, I would attend her. He at the same time stated, that his reason for then calling on me was, that an application had been made by another medical man* to be employed at the time. I promised to attend.

^{* &}quot; Not Mr. GRIFFITH."

"On Friday the 1st February last, in the afternoon, I received a summons from Mrs. D. when she complained of slight pain in the back and loins; and there was reason to believe labour was commencing, notwithstanding it was full three weeks earlier than expected.

"Between ten and eleven I returned to remain in the house during the night. At this time I ascertained the head was the part presenting, and after assuring Mrs. D. there was every prospect of the most successful issue of the labour, I retired.

"Between three and four o clock A.M. I was again in the room, and was satisfied the labour was going on most steadily, though slowly; the membranes being now insinuated within the opening Os Uteri. At eight the improved state of my patient was evident, the Os Uteri being further dilated, the head becoming somewhat more conical, and descending lower futo the pelvis. The membranes were The pains at this time returned as frequently and as forcibly, though not with the same lancinating suffering as experienced before the protrusion of the membranes. After giving some general directions, and repeatedly assuring Mrs. D. and her attendants that all was going on most safely, on retiring from the room I informed Miss F. (Mrs. D.'s sister) and the nurse, that the labour, though lingering, was not longer than a first labour most frequently is, and that I should not be surprised if it yet continued a great many hours; nay, even if night were again to return before it was completed. Miss F. thought it very likely, as her mother's labours always lasted forty-eight hours. The Nurse stated that her own continued much longer. Miss F. then enquired if I was leaving them: to which I replied, I was; but should return in due time to render every assistance required.

"Mrs. D. had within the last twenty-four hours very frequently and readily passed water; the bowels had within the same period been thrice freely opened; she had taken as much nourishment as was necessary, and had constantly dozed between her pains. Indeed she was as well as any

person I ever saw in labour, and was suffering as little, considering that the pelvis is not very capacious.

"Between eleven and twelve I returned to Mr. D.'s, and upon rapping at the door the servant informed me, her master presented his respects, and hoped I should not be offended at his having just asked his friend Mr. GRIFFITH to see Mrs. D. I enquired was Mr. GRIFFITH then in the house. She said he was up stairs in the bed-room. I walked up stairs, and, upon entering the room, observed Mr. Griffith employed at the bed-side. When he raised his head, I told him I did not come there wishing to interfere with any thing done in my absence, although I thought the whole affair very unusual and indelicate, but I came for him to state, if, in the examination he had made, he had observed any thing in the labour that did not promise the utmost safety and the most satisfactory result. Mr. G. replied he had not; and that in his opinion Mrs. D. was doing perfectly well, and he had so made his report to Mr. and Mrs. D. and the family; but that he had thought it necessary to hasten the labour. My enquiry immediately was, "And pray, Sir, what means have you used?" To which the reply was, "I have dilated the parts, and given a glyster." "Dilated the parts," I observed, "in a labour going on so perfectly well! How can you talk in such terms to a medical man?" Mr. G. then exclaimed, he always thought it his duty to help his patients out of their difficulties as speedily as possible, and cared not for what any other medical man might say. He then said, "Sir, you stated at eight o'clock this morning it would be a great many hours, and perhaps night might return before Mrs. D. was delivered, I will convince you you are grossly mistaken. The head is now on the soft parts. You have only during the labour made one examination, and no wonder you should not know how it was going on." "For the latter part of this statement, Mr. G. to whom do you owe your authority?.' "To the Nurse." "It is wrong!" I have made just so many examinations, three in number, as to be perfectly satisfied with Mrs.

D.'s situation, and am gratified to have made them unobserved by any person excepting Mrs. D. I in no way whatever desire to retract my opinion; but I invariably think it best, when an enquiry is made particularly in a first labour, rather to state a longer than a shorter period for the probable duration of the labour; nay, I even now repeat, provided you have not recourse to any artificial means to deliver (it being allowed by both parties that all is going on perfectly well), that it will prove a great many hours from eight this morning, and night might return again, be fore the labour is completed." Mr. G. then said, "Impossible!" and further, that he would forfeit his life, with other strong expressions, if the child was not born in two hours-it now being twelve. Agreeing with Mr. G. the patient's room was not the place for further discussion, I left it, accompanied by Mrs. C. (Mr. D.'s sister), who, in terms the most polite and satisfactory, expressed her concern for what had happened, and trusted I would not withdraw my attendance upon Mrs. D. and family. I could not refrain from observing, that she must consider me very deficient in feeling indeed, if, after the extraordinary line of conduct adopted in this instance, I were again to subject myself to a similar intrusion; and wished Mrs. C. a good morning.

"About six o'clock in the evening I sent to enquire after Mrs. D. and in reply received a message, stating that Mrs. D. and her little boy were doing very well, and that she had been delivered a great while. I was satisfied it could not have been at two o'clock. I heard nothing more of Mrs. D. until the following Tuesday, when I was met by Mr. D. who begged I would allow him an opportunity to explain his conduct; and I was informed by him that the child was not born until ten minutes before five o'clock; and when I enquired if instruments were not then used, Mr. D. replied they were; Mr. Griffith having stated to the family that they were necessary, in consequence of the neval string having encircled the child's neck.

"Under these circumstances, I cannot help seriously be-

lieving, that Mr GRIFFITH, placing his conduct in the most favourable point of view, acted rashly, indelicately, and unjustly. Our opinions being so entirely at variance as to the probable duration of the labour—he most forcibly insisting, after the help he had given, that nothing could prevent its being over, without the least further difficulty, in the space of two hours at the utmost: I at the same time not only not retracting but persisting in the opinion I had given early in the morning, namely, that it would certainly continue a great many hours, and perhaps night again return before it was completed; I repeat, that, under these circumstances, I had a right to expect, that when the labour was protracted during his sole management, until "a great many hours had elapsed," and night was approaching, and the labour pains very powerful, that instruments should not have been resorted to to force the child into the world, without a third person having been called in to sanction the necessity of so violent a measure. The reason assigned for delivering with instruments, that the neck of the child was encircled by the navel string, is, in my opinion, undeserving of serious attention.

"It has been stated, that after the conversation held by Mr. Griffith and myself in the room, the pains became more lingering for a considerable time, but were afterwards very powerful. As I was not present, I do not pretend to contradict the statement; but I cannot help insisting that there was almost a certainty of such an unfavourable change being produced by the parts having been artificially dilated, which Mr. G. confessed he had done. The late Dr. Denman and others who have written on the subject, consider dilating the parts, when a labour is going on well, to be an abominable custom."

In the preceding CIRCULAR the first insinuation is, that I deviated from the liberal, confidential conduct, which Mem-

bers of the Profession owe to each other;" and that my attendance at the summons in this Family, was "indelicate and artful interference" on my part.

The plain account of my being called in is as follows.

About 8 o'clock on Saturday morning, 2d Feb. before I had quitted my bed-chamber, a gentleman waited upon me, and said that Mr. D. had sent to request the favor that I would attend Mrs. D. who was then in labour, and had been attended by Mr. Wynne. I hesitated, by answering that I had not the pleasure of knowing either Mr. or Mrs. D.; that I had never in my life spoken to either of them. The messenger replied, that the Nurse and Family were not satisfied with Mr. Wynne's conduct, and had been advised to call in other assistance; that Mrs. D. was extremely exhausted, and had declared that she "knew she could not survive." I answered that if such was the impression, I certainly would hasten to Mr. D.'s house: which I did. After I had remained there about an hour, I stated to the Family my opinion upon Mrs. D.'s case; and I mentioned to the Relatives who were present, what I considered the cause of Mrs. D.'s lingering and protracted labor. When I

had so stated my opinion, I offered to retire, if it were agreeable to the Family, and leave the case again to Mr. Wynne; but I was pressingly requested to continue my attendance. Soon afterwards Mr. Wynne rushed into the chamber. Instead of narrating what then took place, I beg to refer to the statement of the Family as given in Mr. Drury's Letter, which I shall presently introduce.

Upon Mr. Wynne's view of this case, as a Medical Man, I shall offer no illiberal remarks. I differed from him; I claim the right of private judgment to differ from him; and I freely allow him the same privilege to differ from me. Having practised—I may without vanity say, successfully practised—20 years as an Accoucheur, and having witnessed cases at least ten times more numerous than ever came before Mr. Wynne's observation, I felt it unnecessary to surrender my own opinion to the dogmatical dictum of Mr. Wynne.

If I were disposed to be critical, I might point out strange inconsistences in Mr. Wynne's tale. How can we reconcile his assurances "that the issue of the labour would be most successful"—"that she was as well as any person he had ever seen in labour;"

how can we reconcile such expressions with his predictions that she "might still linger 48 hours," (having at that moment been 31 hours in labour) and that "in all probability the child would be born dead?" also another sample: "Between 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning" (he says) "I was satisfied the labour was going on most steadily, though slowly:" he went to bed. "At 8 o'clock" (he continues) "the improved state of my patient was evident. — — — "The pains at this time returned frequently, and forcibly:" yet he then went away from Thus at 8 o'clock he discovers the House! symptoms that Mrs. D. might quickly be relieved, for "the pains returned frequently and forcibly," yet he went away and did not return until four hours afterwards. I ask-Was it culpable, on the part of the Family, influenced as their fears were by Mr W.'s gloomy opinon, and during such an anxious interval, to apply to a Medical Adviser?

But Mr. Wynne assumes great credit for foreboding with exactness the length of time which would elapse before the termination of the labour. Ist—"he should not be surprised if it yet continued a great many hours;" 2nd, "nay, even night might return before it was completed; 3rd, or "it might

and this latter period "was very likely, as her Mother's labours always lasted 48 hours!!!" In short, Mr. Wynne's Prophecies were like those of the renowned Francis Moore, Physician and Almanack-maker, who always claims the liberal allowance of three days before and three days after the point of time which he fixes upon for the birth of those portentous events which his unerring genius fortels.*

But Mr. Wynne is not only gifted with the power of Prophecy, but he is endowed with Invisible Agency also: for he says, "I have made "just so many examinations, three in num-"ber, as to be perfectly satisfied with Mrs." D.'s situation, and am gratified to have "made them unobserved by any person, "&c." Thus highly gifted, Mr. Wynne was doubtless quite justified in quitting his Patient at the eleventh hour.

But without any pretensions on my part to supernatural ability, I have the supreme gratification of referring to the living Infant, which Mr. Wynne prophecied would be born dead;

^{*} The reader will bear in mind that the Patient had been 31 hours in labour before Mr. Wynne foretold that she would be 48 hours longer.

and to the living Mother, who was not by me allowed to linger in suffering 48 hours, nor to perish through exhaustion.—I appeal to some of my respectable and skilful brethern in the profession, with whom I have acted upon like occasions, and by whom my mode of Practice is well known, whether I ever acted "rashly, indelicately, and unjustly;" and at the same time I appeal to the Profession at large, whether decision and promptitude are not more essential in cases of Midwifery, than in any other branch of the Profession. Mr. Wynne may gainsay this; -but, judging from his quotation, he appears to have been taught (if taught at all) in a most disastrous School-that of Dr. Denman, the father-in-law of the unhappy Sir Richard Croft, who attended our lamented Princess Charlotte and the Lady of the Rev. Dr. Thackeray. There is scarcely an Accoucheur in the kingdom who does not know to what cause those painfully remembered deaths may very probably be ascribed.—"A Patron," (said Dr. Johnson sarcastically to Lord Chesterfield) "seems to be one who looks "with unconcern on a man struggling for "his life in the water, and when he has "reached ground encumbers him with help." A Medical Attendant, (Mr. Wynne seems to think) ought to be of precisely the same utility to his Patient.

When Mr. Wynne's Circular Letter reached me I was surprised; because I had not personally offended Mr. Wynne,—nor had I assumed any triumph over him—nor had I reported the case or any of its circumstances even to my most intimate friends. A few days after Mr. Wynne's Letter appeared, I wrote the following queries to Mr. D.; and though I feel strongly his motives for declining to answer them, still, I must âdd, I am disappointed that he did not comply.

" To Mr. DRURY,

" Shrewsbury, March 15th, 1822.

66 SIR,

Mrs. D.'s feelings, to have the privacy of your family broken in upon and made the subject of public discussion, I am nevertheless under the painful necessity of requesting your Answers to the following questions, in consequence of Mr. Wynne's extraordinary circular "statement," reflecting on my conduct and reputation, as a Medical man, while in attendance at your house on the 2d February last: You have doubtless seen Mr. Wynne's statement. I ask for no favour, but justice.

66 And am Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

" W. GRIFFITH."

"Please to write your Answers opposite the Queries, and return the paper to me."

"QUESTIONS TO MR. DRURY.

of your relatives and friends, that I was summoned to your house on Saturday morning, 2d February; your wife declaring a strong presentiment that she should not recover the event? Please to state the particulars.

"2nd. Was there any application to you, or Mrs. D. by any Medical man in Shrewsbury, (as stated by Mr. W. in his second paragraph), to be employed as Mrs. D.'s Accoucheur?

"3rd. Did you understand that Mr. Wynne remained long in the room at any period of his attendance on Mrs. D.; and did he inform the Nurse, or Miss F. the nature of the labour, and the probable result? Do you know whether he stated his belief that the Child was dead? This latter question I put in consequence of my recollection of your remarks after the Birth of the Infant.

"4th. On Mr. Wynne leaving Mrs. D. about eight o'clock (according to his statement, Page 2), on Saturday morning, and declaring her case was going on 'steadily but slowly,' the pains being then 'frequently and forcibly,' what was the impression on the minds of her attendants, after the Patient had been much exhausted from her sufferings during the night and preceding day? Did Mr. W. state the probability of the duration of the labour? How long a time intervened before he returned?

house did I venture to give my opinion, as to the nature of Mrs. D.'s case, and the probable cause of her long and protracted labour? This question I pro-

pose in consequence of the remarks in page 2 of Mr. W.'s statement.

"6th. In allusion to Mr. W.'s remark, that 'he agreed with me that the Patient's room was not the place for discussion,' I beg to ask, In what manner did Mr. Wynne enter Mrs. D.'s bed-room while I was there; and did any part of my conduct then, or since, appear to yourself or the family as an 'artful interference?'

"7th. Did the attendants on Mrs. D. hear Mr. Wynne, while addressing me in the room, say any thing about Mrs. D. not being delivered before night, unless artificial means were had recourse to?

"8th. Being accused (page 3) of acting 'rashly, indelicately, and unjustly' in releasing Mrs. D. from her sufferings, I wish Mrs. D. and her attendants to state deliberately their opinion on this point, and whether Mrs. D. suffered from fever, or any other cause, more than ladies in general suffer from natural labour? Your Nurse having been the Mother of twenty children, and having attended many ladies for a number of years, may she be appealed to on this point, as well as to the appearance of the infant?"

[&]quot;Castle Street, Shrewsbury, 18th March, 1822.

[&]quot;In reply to yours of the 15th instant, in which you set forth a number of questions, relating to the subject of Mrs. D.'s confinement, and also to a printed Letter of Mr. Rice Wynne; I beg to observe that, from motives of delicacy, I cannot become accessory to that affair being made a subject of public discussion, and therefore decline answering them.

I nevertheless consider it due to you to observe,

ligation to you, for the prompt and valuable professional assistance rendered Mrs. D. when in a state of great suffering and danger; and that every statement in Mr. Wynne's Letter reflecting upon you, either in your professional capacity or otherwise, is totally contradicted by the circumstances as they occurred; the whole of which Letter is of a character decidedly opposed to that regard for delicacy and feeling so generally observed by, and absolutely requisite in, the Profession, and so important to the comfort of Private Life.

"Your attendance on the occasion was at my own request, to which I was urged by the alarming report of my Relatives and the Nurse, as well as by the assertion of Mr. Wynne, who stated, that the labour would be 48 hours; that probably it might continue till Monday morning; and that in all probability the child would be dead.

"The charge of 'artful interference' is altogether splenetic and unjust,

" I am Sir,

"Your very obedient servant, "R. DRURY."

[&]quot; Claremont Hill, March 18th, 1822.

⁶⁶ SIR,

[&]quot;I lament as much as yourself the very indelicate nature of the subject unnecessarily forced upon public notice by Mr. Wynne; and while I thank you for your letter as a general answer, I feel somewhat disappointed at your objections to afford me specific answers to my questions.

[&]quot;Perhaps, however, you will satisfy my own feel-

ings so far as to bear testimony to my conduct, and to that of Mr. Wynne when he entered the room. You have doubtless remarked in Mr. W.'s statement, that I am accused of having acted 'rashly, indelicately, and unjustly;' and in answer to these charges I hope you will narrate the conversation and conduct of Mr. Wynne and myself with as much accuracy as possible.

"I am, Sir,
"Your obedient servant,
"W. GRIFFITH."

" Castle Street, 19th March, 1822.

66 SIR,

"In justice to your professional character, I shall not hesitate to answer your letter of yesterday.

"Mr. Wynne, on entering my house, and being told that you had been called in, rushed past the servant, went hastily up stairs, and entered Mrs. D.'s room very abruptly with his hat on, without notice at the cahmber door; and after expressing great virulence and indignation towards yourself, in loud language, was asked to leave the room three times by Mrs. C., but he refused, adding, that there had been an account standing between himself and you, and it should be settled then and there. Your conduct, on the contrary, was conciliating and gentlemanly.

"I am, Sir,
"Your obedient servant,

" R. DRURY."

I think I might here rest my case. Upon

the "delicacy" of Mr. Wynne's statement I shall say nothing. His "liberal and confidential conduct" manifested by his printed exposure of domestic incidents, which are always kept sacred by respectable Members of our Profession, shall at present pass without censure from me. But as Mr. Wynne has dragged this matter before the public, his personal attack upon myself shall not pass without public rebuke.

What right has Mr. Wynne to arraign me for obeying the sudden summons from a private family, conveyed to me, as it was, in the most delicate manner possible? I was informed that the case was of extreme urgency. Yet, I ought, forsooth, according to Mr. Wynne's notions of Professional etiquette, -according to his "experience of the comfort and happiness of the Medical Profession,"-to have divested myself of all sympathy for another's sufferings,—and to have coldly sought after that gentleman to ask his permission to attend. And this is the "conduct," on which Mr. Wynne " is convinced by experience that the com-" fort, happiness and respectability of the " Medical Profession very materially de-" pend." I have, however, been schooled in other principles, and am " convinced by

" experience that the comfort, happiness, and respectability of the Medical Pro"fession, depend upon skill to discover, and promptitude to administer efficacious remedies for the thousand pangs "that flesh is heir to." The Medical Profession will not thank Mr. Wynne for telling the world that our "comfort and happiness very materially depend" upon a very nice regard for ourselves, and a disregard for the pangs of others.

After I had visited Mrs. D. I probably should have explained to Mr. Wynne the manner in which I had been called in, and the peremptory nature of the message. But his outrageous conduct to me, when he entered the chamber, merited no such notice. I entreated him not to manifest violence there.* I called his attention to the Patient's sufferings, in the hope of appeasing him. I offered to retire, but was prevented by the solicitations of the Patient and her sister. Mrs. C. politely requested Mr. Wynne to leave the room; and it might have been supposed that his "delicacy" would not have remained

^{*} Mr. Wynne says—" Agreeing with Mr. Griffith that the Patient's room was not the place for discussion, I left it,"

to hear the request thrice repeated. But, in truth, his demeanour and tone perfectly astonished every person present, and it is most happy that no ill consequences ensued to the Patient. Entirely to Mr. Wynne's outrageous conduct I attribute the suspension of the pains soon after, and the protracted issue of the labor;—entirely to his violent "interference" and "loud language," I ascribe the "unfavourable change produced:" and I appeal to every Medical man who reads the recital in Mr. D.'s second letter, whether there is not just ground for this opinion.

It appears, indeed, but too manifest, that Mr. Wynne's ebullition of anger, which he has since thrown off in his Circular Letter, was occasioned by the heat of professional jealousy and wounded pride. His unprovoked expressions when he rushed into the Patient's room, induce me (I hope not uncharitably) to draw such a conclusion. What could he mean by saying in the presence of Mr. Drury's family, that "there had been an account between himself and me, and that it should be settled there and then?" Let him explain these words, for I know not their hidden meaning. The imputation of "art ful interference" on my part, as if I meanly sought to supplant Mr. Wynne in his profes-

sion, or ever stooped to obtain a Patient by unworthy artifice, is a charge as wanton as it is unfounded; and he who makes such a charge against me, knows it to be untrue: He knows, too, that my tutor, my relative, my partner, would spurn at such misconduct. But I regret to perceive that Mr. Wynne is not very cautious in his attack upon another member of the profession: for he asserts that an "application had been made to Mr. "Drury by another medical man, to be em-"ployed at the time of Mrs. D.' confinement." I have authority to say this insinuation against that other professional gentleman is not correct.—Is it not surprising that acts of meanness are charged against the profession with so little caution?*

I have now, I trust, shewn by evidence and facts, that Mr. Wynne's assertions, as far as they regard myself, are not bottomed upon truth,---and that his ill-fated production is, in a Medical point of view, beneath notice, because it is a tissue of inconsistencies,

^{*}The simple fact, as communicated to Mr. Wynne by Mr. Drury, is this: A lady, a neighbour, recommended a highly respectable Medical Attendant of this town to Mrs. Drury, if she had not previously fixed upon any one. This, however, is a very different version to that in Mr. Wynne's Statement;" for he there insinuates that the Medical man made an application to be employed!

impunged by the facts of the Case, and by the result of the Labour. I have repelled with scorn, and thrown back upon himself, his insinuations of "artful interference" and "illiberal and unconfidential conduct;" and I have given my reasons for inferring that his violent conduct and his published "statement" were excited by his own morbid self-estimation and professional jealousy. To that Profession, of which I am an humble Member, and among which I trust I have never been "unmindful of reputation and character;"-to the Members of that Profession, to whom Mr. Wynne has appealed, I respectfully and confidently submit my reply. W. GRIFFITH.

Claremont Hill, 30th March, 1822.

FINIS.

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